



08 Staff, volunteers and students' policy

8.13 Menopause Policy

Introduction Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its employees.

This policy sets out the support for employees experiencing menopausal symptoms. The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

We want all staff to understand what the menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment.

The average age for a woman to reach menopause in the UK is 51, with the changing age of the UK's workforce this means that there are now around 4.4 million women aged 50-64 in work and the vast majority of these will go through the menopause transition during their working lives (ONS 2019). The menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline. Premature menopause happens when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency. For some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger.

Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support they may need (CIPD) Altman 2015).

This policy sets out the guidelines for staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

Aims The aims of this policy are to:

- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Support the understanding of what menopause is, so that staff can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on the setting's policy and practices.
- Inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women at work.
- Ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support and any appropriate reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Demonstrate our commitment to supporting women's needs during menopause.
- Highlight the setting's duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees.

Definitions Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

For most women, the menopause starts between the ages of 45 and 55. Premature menopause happens when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency. For some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments. The NHS estimates that around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

Symptoms of Menopause It is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe, while 4 out of 10 women do not seek medical advice even though their symptoms are worse than they expected. (Menopause in the Workplace 2017).

Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but are not limited to):

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods

Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically.

Roles and Responsibilities All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health.
- Being open and honest in conversations with their line manager.
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment where staff can talk openly about the menopause.
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.
- If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to a trustee or a Mental Health First Aider.

All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy.
- Have open discussions about menopause, treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially.
- Record adjustments agreed, and any actions to be implemented.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and regular check-ins.

Trustees will:

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this policy.

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)* should:

- Identify early signs of low wellbeing.
- Talk through the individuals concerns and find out about seeking further assistance.
- Signpost individuals to support as needed.

*See Building a Resilient Workforce (Early Years Alliance 2019)

Support Reasonable Adjustments In some cases, menopause symptoms can have a long term and substantial impact on an employee's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, these symptoms could be considered a disability. In cases where menopause symptoms amount to a disability, an employer will be under a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Temperature control in settings The setting strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees and will allow flexibility within its dress code where reasonable.

Flexible working The setting recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

- A change to the pattern of hours worked
- A reduction in working hours
- More frequent breaks

Employees should discuss such requests with their line manager in the first instance. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis.

Data protection We will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

Further information

- The National Health Service provides an overview of menopause www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx
- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines explain how a GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/
- The Daisy Network provides support to women, along with the families and partners, who have been diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) www.daisynetwork.org/
- The Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists provide information for women, their partners and families about hysterectomies www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/hysterectomy/
- The Menopause Charity's mission is to bust myths, overcome ignorance and make menopause symptoms history www.themenopausecharity.org/
- Henpicked provides a website for women to discuss menopause and find inspirational life stories, tips and advice henpicked.net
- Menopause Matters provides information about menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options www.menopausematters.co.uk
- Menopause Café deliver events where people can gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause www.menopausecafe.net

Appendix 1

Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template

Name:

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Job Title

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Present at meeting

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(line manager name and position)

Date of discussion

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Summary of Discussion:

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Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

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Date of next review meeting

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Signed (Member of staff)

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Signed (Manager)

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